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# Disaster News

## **FEMA AID TO CALIFORNIANS TOPS \$5.6 MILLION**

**PASADENA, Calif.** — Two weeks after wildfires tore through seven California counties, more than \$5.6 million in federal funds is in the hands of individuals and families affected by the disaster. More than 14,500 Californians have registered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for federal and state disaster assistance.

“We’re very pleased that we’ve been able to get help to so many people so quickly,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Hall of FEMA. “This is why we’re here. Our goal is to help people get their lives back together as quickly and efficiently as possible.”

“Our county, state and federal partners have worked hard to expedite the needed help,” said State Coordinating Officer Henry Renteria, Executive Director of the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services. “The state and FEMA are committed to a unified strategy to resolve each and every challenge presented during this recovery effort.”

As a result of President Bush’s disaster declaration of Oct. 24, at the request of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, residents and business owners of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, who were affected by the wildfires, are eligible to apply for federal and state individual assistance.

The funds can be used to help: find temporary housing when homes are either destroyed or made unlivable by the fires; pay for home rebuilding or repairs; replace personal property not covered by insurance; and assist with necessary disaster-related expenses.

Here are current disaster recovery efforts at a glance:

- **14,728** Californians registered for disaster.
- **\$5,625,790** in grants approved for Californians that includes **\$4,571,714** for housing and **\$1,054,076** for other needs assistance.
- **\$11,784,700** in Small Business Administration loans to individuals and businesses.
- **9** assistance centers set up as close as possible to the hardest-hit areas: Fallbrook, Rancho Bernardo, Ramona and El Cajon (San Diego County), National Orange Fairgrounds and Running Springs (San Bernardino County), Santa Clarita and Malibu (Los Angeles County), and Irvine (Orange County).
- **156** community relations specialists in the community, meeting with people affected by the disaster, local officials, community, and business and religious leaders, to answer questions, explain recovery programs and help solve problems.

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- **2** multi-disciplinary assessment teams from state agencies in San Diego County to evaluate the needs of communities without electrical power and other services.
- **5,638** inspections completed of damaged or destroyed residences.

Californians in the seven declared counties are urged to register with FEMA for assistance by calling toll-free **1-800-621-FEMA (3362)**, or (TTY) **1-800-462-7585**. The FEMA lines are open 24/7 every day until further notice. It's also possible to register online at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). Callers should have pen and paper ready, social security number, insurance information and phone numbers where they can be contacted.

*FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.*

*The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating the California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.*

*Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, economic status or retaliation. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or contact your State Office of Equal rights. If suspicious of any abuse of FEMA programs, please contact the fraud hotline at 1-800-323-8603.*

*Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.*

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